

to this important cause. I hope many more will donate in the days ahead.

I'm also honored to be with the Ambassador from Russia, Yuriy Ushakov. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for coming. He's here with the children from the Russian Embassy School. Earlier this month, I went to the Russian Embassy to express my condolences on behalf of the American people. The atrocities in Beslan reinforce the need for free nations to work together for peace and security. All Americans stand with the people of Russia in this wake of tragedy. We will stand with them as they rebuild, just like we stand with the people of Florida.

Another storm is headed in that direction. It will be another test of will and compassion. I know the Red Cross is ready, and I want to thank the Red Cross for being ready to help the citizens of that beleaguered State one more time. We extend our prayers to the people down there. We hope for the very best. The Federal Government, the armies of compassion stand ready to help.

Thank you all for coming. Thank you for your compassion. May God bless the people of Russia and the United States. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:57 a.m. on the South Portico at the White House.

Remarks in a Discussion on Education in Janesville, Wisconsin September 24, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for coming. I'm proud you're here. I appreciate you coming. Please be seated. Please be seated. We've got a little work to do. I'm here to tell you why I'm running for President again. First, I'm here to tell you I'm asking for your vote and your support.

I'm really pleased to be back in the State of Wisconsin. It's a fabulous place you got here. What a wonderful State. The people are kind and generous and hardworking. It's—Laura and I love coming. Speaking about Laura, I wish she were here with me. No, I know, she's out campaigning. A lot of times they say, "Well, I'd rather you stay home, President, and let Mrs. Bush come." [*Laughter*] But I can understand the logic.

It's a true story—when I said, "Laura, will you marry me," she said, "Fine, just so long as I never have to give any speeches." [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to the promise. People in the country got to see her speak in New

York a while ago. They saw a compassionate, strong, decent woman in Laura Bush. I love her dearly, and I'm really proud of her. I like to tell people, I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back in for 4 more years, but perhaps the most important one of all, so that Laura will be First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He's working hard. I tell people he doesn't have the curliest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. [*Laughter*] I picked him because of his experience and judgment. I picked him because he can get the job done for the American people.

I'm proud of Paul Ryan. I'm proud of working with your Congressman. He's a good, solid man, I'm telling you. He's smart, capable. He's a good thinker. He married well in Janna. [*Laughter*] He keeps bugging me to come to his congressional district as often as possible, and now I know why. It's a beautiful part of the world.

I know Dave Magnum is with us. I wish him best in his run for the United States Congress in the Second Congressional District. Good luck. Tim Michels was with us. I think he spoke and left to go campaign.

Listen, I want to thank all the local officials who are here and all the grassroots activists. I want to thank you face to face for what you're going to do, which is put up the signs and make the phone calls and head the people to the polls and register people to vote. And let me tell you something, when you're registering people to vote, don't forget discerning Democrats like Zell Miller. There's a lot of Democrats out there, a lot of independents out there who want this country to be safer and stronger and better, and they know that Dick Cheney and I can get the job done.

Today when we landed, I met Tami Doetch. Where are you, Tami? Somewhere—oh, there she is. Good. Thanks for coming. She was at the base of Air Force One, right there at the steps. I'll tell you why she was out there. She is a teacher at Wilson Elementary School, right here in Janesville, Wisconsin. She won the Department of Education's American Stars of Teaching award. Let me tell you, that's a long—those are long—that's a long phrase for saying, she's a really good teacher. She's an excellent teacher. She embodies the spirit of the education reform we passed. She's willing to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. She understands, if you have low expectations for the children, you'll achieve lousy results. If you raise the standard, if you raise the sights, if you have excellence as your goal and you believe in using curriculum that works and you're willing to measure to determine that which you're using is working, you can achieve excellence in the classroom. And that's why Tami Doetch is here. I want to thank you for your compassion. I want to thank you for teaching.

We're closing an achievement gap here in America. See, we measured and determined that some kids weren't learning, and

it just wasn't right, when you think about it. Think about a system that just shuffled kids through. That's a system that's not hopeful, as far as I was concerned. And so we're measuring early; we're solving problems before they're too late. And an achievement gap is closing in America, and we're not going to turn back to the old days. We're not going to turn back to the old days of not expecting the best for every single child in America. We're making great progress toward excellence.

As you can see, I've been joined by some of the citizens from this fine community. We're going to talk about education. But before we do that, I want to talk about a couple of other things. First, I want you to understand, I know that we live in a changing world. And it's important for Government systems to change with that changing world. When I say "changing world," listen, there are a lot of women who now work inside the home and outside the home. But the labor laws were designed for yesterday. See, I believe we ought to change labor laws so that women and moms can have flex-time and comp-time, so they can balance family time with work time and do their job—be able to do both jobs.

In the old days, a person would have one job and one career for their entire lifetime. Today, people change jobs often and careers often. And yet, the worker training programs don't reflect the changing times. We're going to talk about worker training here in a minute. The pension plans, for example, were designed for yesterday. Now, look, if you're on Social Security, nothing is going to change. I don't care what they tell you in the course of this campaign. You're going to get your check. You know how it goes every time campaign season comes around. You might remember what happened in this State 4 years ago during that campaign time. People were—said, "If Bush gets elected, you're not going to get your Social Security check." It didn't happen, did it?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Yes, you're getting your check, and you're going to continue to get your check. Now, baby boomers, we're probably going to get our checks too. It's the younger kids we've got to worry about. It's the children and the grandchildren. We need to be thinking about tomorrow, not yesterday. I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own money and set up a personal savings account to make sure the Social Security system fulfills its promise to a younger generation of Americans.

The health care system needs to change. People are changing jobs. If they're changing jobs, the system ought to help them design insurance programs they can take job to job and call their own. That's why I'm for health savings accounts. Health savings accounts is a tax-free way for workers to set aside money, or workers' employee—employers to set aside money that they can count—they call their own. So they're the decisionmaker.

There's catastrophic care in there for the worker, as well as a savings account. And if they don't spend that money on routine health costs, it's theirs. They can carry it from year to year, and generation to generation. It makes sense. It's a commonsensical plan, particularly if you think the Federal Government should not be running health care.

And that's where we have a difference in this campaign. It's a big difference in this campaign. The fellow I'm running against believes that the Federal Government ought to be making your decisions. That's what he believes. We just have an honest difference of opinion. Everything we're going to do is to make sure the decisionmaking is between patients and doctors, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

Several other points I want to make on health care right quick. One, we're going to take care of the poor in this country. I believe we have an obligation to do so. That's why I'm for community health cen-

ters. Community health centers are where the poor and indigent can get preventative care and primary care, as opposed to emergency rooms in local hospitals. We need to have community health centers in every poor county in America.

We're going to make sure our States access the children's health care programs for low-income families. We're going to make sure technology helps wring out some of the costs in health care. But do you realize 50 percent of the working uninsured work for small businesses? Now, think about that—50 percent of the working uninsured are employed by a small business, which means small businesses are obviously having a problem affording health care.

What I think ought to happen is small businesses ought to be allowed to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries so they can buy health care at the same discounts that big companies can buy health care. That means the decisionmakers are the health care—the decisionmakers are the small-business owners and the employees. My opponent has a different view. He thinks we ought to be expanding Government programs. I just fundamentally disagree. We've got a practical, commonsense way to deal with health care cost and availability. And one practical, commonsense way is to get rid of these frivolous lawsuits that are running good docs out of business.

You can't be pro-doctor, pro-patient, pro-hospital, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. [*Laughter*] I think you have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a trial lawyer on the ticket. I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform—now.

At the heart of many of my programs is the concept of owning something. I think you can get a—you know, younger workers can own their own part of the Social Security system, an account they call their own; people can own their own health care plan they can take from job to job. One of the most hopeful statistics in a changing world is the fact that more and more people own

their own home. Think about that. The homeownership rate is at an alltime high under my administration. I love the idea that more and more people are opening up their front door where they live, saying, "Welcome to my home. Come in to my piece of property." A part of a hopeful society is to encourage ownership, and we will continue to do so over the next 4 years.

Part of a hopeful society is also—is to making sure the economy grows. Now, when you're out rounding up the vote, remind people what we have been through, and we've been through a lot. First of all, the stock market started to go down prior to my arrival in Washington, DC. It was the beginning of signs to come, because right after Dick Cheney and I got sworn in, we headed into a recession, three quarters of negative growth. And those were tough times for people. I know they were tough times. I know it's a tough time for small-business owners and workers. It's tough times when people are wondering whether or not there's stability in their lives.

We started to get—we really started to get our feet back on the ground, and then we ran into another problem. Some of the CEOs in America forgot what it meant to be a responsible American. See, a responsibility society says, you'll tell the truth. They didn't tell the truth. We passed tough laws. It's now abundantly clear, we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

And then we got hit. Then we got attacked. And those attacks cost us jobs. It hurt. It hurt in a lot of ways. I'm going to talk about what the attacks meant a little later on in terms of keeping the peace, too, and defending ourselves. But they hurt, and we're overcoming those obstacles. Our economy is strong. It's getting stronger. It's strong and getting stronger because we've got great workers in America. We've got fantastic entrepreneurs and small-business owners. We've got great farmers, many of whom live right here in the great State

of Wisconsin. We created 1.7 million new jobs since August of '03. Things are getting better. We're overcoming the obstacles. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. That's lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate in your State is 4.8 percent. People are working, and that's a good sign.

So the fundamental question is, how do we keep this prosperity going? We've recovered. We've recovered not only because we're good workers, good, hard people—good hard-working people, and we've got great entrepreneurial spirit, we've recovered, as well, because of tax cuts. Those tax cuts helped.

And so here's how we keep the prosperity going: One, we reduce the regulations and the cost of lawsuits on the people of this country that are employing people. The more lawsuits there are, the harder it is for people to be able to find a job. That's just the way it is. The more regulations there are, meaningless regulations, the harder it is for people to find work in America.

In order to make sure jobs stay right here in this country and people can find work, we need an energy policy that encourages conservation; that renews—uses renewable sources of energy like corn through ethanol, and biodiesel as a result of soybeans; that uses technology to use coal in an environmentally friendly way; that allows us to explore for environmentally friendly ways for natural gas by use of technology. What I'm telling you is this: I've submitted a plan to the United States Congress—it is stuck—that will make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy and, in return, means people will be able to find work here at home.

There's another way to keep jobs here, is to encourage trade, is to reject economic isolationism. I know it sounds easy to say, well, jobs will stay here if we just wall ourself off from the rest of the world. I disagree. I strongly disagree. See, I think what we ought to be doing is opening up

markets for U.S. products. We open up our markets for other people, and that's good for you as a consumer. See, if you've got more products to choose from, you're likely to get that which you want at a better price and higher quality. That's how the marketplace works. That's why Presidents of both political parties said, we're going to open up our markets for the sake of consumers. What I'm saying to places like China is that you treat us the way we treat you. You open up your markets so that we have a chance to compete. Because the American farmer, worker, entrepreneur can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, if the rules are fair.

Finally, one other point I want to make is that if you expect jobs to stay here at home, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money in Washington, DC. We got to be fiscally sound about using your money, and we've got to keep your taxes low. Running up your taxes right now will hurt this economic recovery, make no mistake about it.

We have a difference of opinion on taxes in this campaign, and I want you to remind your friends and neighbors about the difference. It starts with this: My opponent has promised over \$2.2 trillion in new Federal spending—so far. *[Laughter]* And that's a lot of money for a fellow from Massachusetts. *[Laughter]* So they said, how are you going to pay for it? And his answer is this: He said, "We're going to tax the rich." Now, you've heard that before, haven't you?

We're about to talk to the so-called rich here in a minute, because about a million small businesses will have their taxes raised because they're Subchapter S and limited partnership. See, many small businesses pay tax at the individual income-tax levels. As a matter of fact, 90 percent of all small businesses pay tax at the individual income-tax level. So when you talk about running up the taxes on individuals, you're running up the tax on job creators, because 70 percent of the new jobs in America are created

by small businesses. That's bad economic policy to tax the job creators, real bad.

Secondly, you can't raise the top two brackets and raise enough to pay for \$2.2 trillion worth of new spending. Now, maybe this is the first campaign in the history where a campaign promise is broken before the election. *[Laughter]* Or there's a tax gap. There's a tax gap. Given my opponent's record, I suspect he wants to spend the money. And there's a tax gap. And guess who always gets to fill the tax gap? You do.

Finally, you've heard the rhetoric before, as well, and you know that the so-called rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason—that's to stick you with the bill. That's what happens every single time, isn't it? We're not going to let him tax you. We're going to carry Wisconsin, and we're going to carry this country next November. *[Applause]*

Okay, no, no, we got work to do here. Hold on. I'm still telling you why I'm running. *[Laughter]* See, I think you've got to tell the people what you're going to do. I think you've got to come to the people and say, here's my vision, here's what I intend to do for the country. You can't decide to run for the sake of holding the office. You've got to tell the people what you intend to do. That's what I did the last time I ran. I did what I said I was going to do, and now I'm telling you what I'm going to do the next 4 years. *[Applause]*

Hold on for a minute, please, please, please. Thanks. Everybody likes to be cheered, but wait a minute; I got something to tell you. *[Laughter]* A changing world means that the nature of the job—the jobs change. That's what we're talking about here. Think about that. Jobs change in a changing world, and therefore, one of the fundamental challenges we have is to make sure that people have the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

One idea of what I'm talking about is this: In North Carolina there was a healthy

textile industry for years. The textile industry became uneconomic. There was better competition. They got beat, and jobs started to get lost. At the same time, however, the health care industry started to grow; that was strong and viable. And there was a lot of health care jobs available, really good-paying health care jobs. As a matter of fact, better paying jobs in the health care field than there were in the—in some of the earlier North Carolina industries. And yet, there was a skills gap. And what we're here to talk about today is how to make sure people have access to good education and good worker training programs so people can match their desire to work with the skills necessary to hold the jobs of the 21st century.

So here are some ideas. Here are some ideas. First, we're going to double the number of workers who are trained through the Worker Investment Act. We've got a great—a wonderful concept coming out of Washington, but we're not training enough workers with the money we spend. Therefore, we need to consolidate programs, strip away bureaucratic rules, get more money to States and community colleges.

Secondly, we're going to utilize our community colleges to make sure people have the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. I've laid out a quarter-billion-dollar initiative for my '05 budget to help good community colleges develop the curriculum and recruit the students necessary so people can find work.

Third, we're going to talk about dual-enrollment programs here today. I think we ought to spend money at Washington, DC, to encourage high school students to go to both community college and high school at the same time. It's good for the student. It's good for the workforce. Third, I think we need to expand Pell grants. We've done so, so long as I've been the President. We've expanded Pell grants by a million students, since I've been the President of the United States, from 4.3

million to 5.3 million students. We upped the grant level of Pell grants.

But here's two new ideas. One is to reward students who take vigorous high school courses, with an extra \$1,000 on their Pell grant. We ought to say, look, if you qualify for Pell grants, go ahead and take tougher courses in high school, math and sciences, which will be needed to fill the jobs of the 21st century, and we'll pay you extra money. It seems to make sense to me. I don't know if you know this, but Pell grants aren't for year-round schooling. That doesn't make any sense. If a student wants to go year round to school, the Pell grant ought to stay with the student. We ought to fund year-round schooling for Pell grant students. So there's some ideas to help people be able to go to college.

New loans—we ought to provide loans for workers for short-term training. You can't get loans, student loans today unless you meet certain criteria, and the criteria prevents short-term worker training. I think we ought to provide loans for people who want to go back to school to get retrained. And I know we need to increase access to higher education in rural and urban areas by eliminating financial aid rules that discourage distance learning.

What I'm telling you is this: Listen, the world we live in is changing. Jobs are changing. People are learning more over the Internet. We've got to be wise about how we spend your money, to reflect the changing times. The workforce rules ought to reflect tomorrow, not yesterday. Our community college systems ought to be supportive because they're good for helping the students get the skills for the jobs of today, not yesterday. What I'm telling you is that I've got a vision that recognizes we're living in a changing world and we're going to use our assets in wise ways to make sure America is a hopeful place for everybody.

So here's who—our first guest, Dr. Eric Larson. Welcome.

Eric A. Larson. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes. So, what do you do?

Dr. Larson. I'm the president of Blackhawk Technical College here in Rock County and also in Green County.

The President. Good. Everybody heard about it? [Applause] It's a good sign, everybody's heard about it. [Laughter]

Dr. Larson. They have. We know that one in nine people in our counties has had a contact from our college.

The President. Oh, good. That's good. So, tell us—listen, you've got some great programs. Tell them what the programs are. [At this point, Dr. Larson made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, listen. Let me—just listen real quick. This is why I'm such a big believer in community colleges. Some places of higher education have a little trouble changing their curriculum. [Laughter] Not to say their curriculum is bad, it's just they don't change. Eric just said that, our curriculum changes with demand. If a business needs help training workers for a job expansion program, they design the curriculum along with the business, as I understand it.

Dr. Larson. That's correct. We work with the business. They will sit at the table with us as we develop that curriculum.

The President. It's pretty good for the community, by the way, to be able to say, we've got a community college. If you've got a—if you're bringing jobs here and you're worried about your workers being trained, bring them here, because our community college is a great place to have your workers trained. We're adjustable. We're flexible. We're affordable, and we are available when it comes to community college education.

What else? Give me some other—give us some other things. You've got dual enrollment?

Dr. Larson. We do. We have a dual-enrollment program where we have high

school students coming to us from the Janesville public schools, and Blackhawk Technical College is offering the instruction. And one of our major health care operators here in town offers a facility for them. Obviously, this isn't a health care area. We train certified nurse assistants while they're in high school. When they graduate from high school, they have their college certificate to take a job as a CNA.

The President. Right, they've got an opportunity to find a job immediately or an opportunity to move on to a more advanced degree. But it happens while they're in high school. It seems to make a lot of sense to me, doesn't it? I mean, you ought to be giving everybody ample opportunity to be able to take advantage of education as it exists. And that's what's happening here at Blackhawk.

Jessica Palmer is with us.

Jessica Palmer. Hi. [Laughter]

The President. You ready to go?

Ms. Palmer. Yes.

The President. Okay, so you are how old?

Ms. Palmer. I am 19 years old.

The President. Good. Went to high school where?

Ms. Palmer. Craig High School in Janesville.

The President. You also went to—

Ms. Palmer. Blackhawk Technical College.

The President. When? [Laughter]

Ms. Palmer. In my senior year of high school.

The President. How about it? Amazing, isn't it? First, you've got to understand, you can't pass a law in Washington that says, Jessica, you will be an ambitious person—[laughter]—or you will take advantage of opportunities available to you. The role of Government is to make opportunity available, not to dictate to people, not to tell them how to live their lives, but to say, here's your chance so you can realize your dream. That's the fundamental difference of philosophy we have, by the way.

Okay, so you went to Blackhawk at the same time you're going to high school. Now, what was that like?

Ms. Palmer. It was pretty hard, but the school district let me get out of school early in order to do my schedule. I went to school at Blackhawk three nights a week.

The President. Three nights a week. Good. Less TV, more study. That's good. [Laughter] So you were studying to be what?

Ms. Palmer. Ultimately, a registered nurse.

The President. Ultimately, a registered nurse. Listen, there's great opportunities in the health care field, I'm telling you. Remember I told you about the North Carolina story? You know, we wept for the textile workers down there, and then we were joyous when we saw them get jobs in the health care field. The health care field is expanding, and it requires a certain skill set. And Jessica is learning the skill set early.

So what were you—so what did you get? What did you get? What kind of degree did you get out of the community college here?

Ms. Palmer. I have a certified nursing assistant certificate.

The President. And that means you can show up at the hospital and get after it.

Ms. Palmer. Yes. [Laughter]

The President. Take my pulse? No. [Laughter] Never mind, okay. So you are—so what are you doing now? You're working, going back to school? Tell us.

Ms. Palmer. Yes, I'm a full-time student at Blackhawk, and I work in a local health facility here in Janesville.

The President. So you're headed to be a registered nurse.

Ms. Palmer. Yes.

The President. And how much longer will that take, do you know?

Ms. Palmer. My clinical starts in the year 2006, and it's 2 years after that.

The President. Right. And the local hospital is helping you, as I understand, with the training.

Ms. Palmer. Yes, while I was in high school, they helped me out.

The President. With the curriculum, right. Explain it, will you. [Laughter]

Dr. Larson. Let me try to help her.

The President. Help me and her, will you? [Laughter]

[*Dr. Larson made further remarks.*]

The President. It is. We ought to expand these around the country. That's what I'm here to talk about, is to how to make sure job training opportunities are available for older workers and younger workers.

Steve Scaccia is with us, president of Freedom Plastics. Let me, first, before we get into job training and how compassionate this guy is and how wonderful their company is, is to tell you something about taxes. He runs a Subchapter S corporation. That means they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. When you hear the talk about taxing the rich or raising the top two brackets, he gets taxed. That's what we're talking about in terms of taxing the rich. It doesn't make any sense the tax job creators like Steve. You listen to what he is doing for his workers, and you ask yourself, does it make sense to leave money inside his coffers or to send it up to Washington, DC. After hearing his story, I'd rather he'd spend the money, not the Government.

And so you tell us what you're doing with those workers in there.

[*Stephen D. Scaccia, president, Freedom Plastics, Inc., made brief remarks.*]

The President. It's an amazing story, isn't it? See, I hear stories like this—I hear entrepreneurial stories like this all over the country. It's why I believe that the role of Government is to create an environment for the entrepreneur to flourish, not to try to create wealth, not to tell people how to run their lives, it's to provide opportunity

so people can not only realize dreams, but people can help others realize their dreams.

I love the small-business sector of this country. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong, thanks to people like Steve. And here's an interesting way to make sure the community college system is useful. Employers can use the community college system to make themselves more productive and, therefore, increase the wages of their employees. And young people coming up can use the community college system to realize their dreams.

So I want to thank you three for coming. You did a great job.

A couple of other things I want to talk about. First of all, in changing times, things don't change—the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity; institutions we hold dear, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. I stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. I stand for judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law. And I stand for encouraging a responsibility society in America, where each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

I also know that—I also know my most important duty is to protect the American people. We show uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

Let me tell you some of the lessons I learned as your President, some of the lessons I learned about September the 11th. Lesson one is that we face an enemy that's coldblooded, and they are haters. They believe in an ideology of hate. They stand for the exact opposite we stand for in America. We believe in freedom of religion. We believe you should worship any way you want. If you choose to worship, or not worship, you're equally an American. If you

choose to worship and you're a Muslim, Jew, or Christian, you're equally an American. That's what we believe. These people believe the exact opposite of that.

We believe you can speak your mind in America. We believe the press should be allowed to flourish. We believe in a lot of freedoms, and they don't. And they're willing to use terror as a tool. Therefore, lesson one is, you can never negotiate with these people; you can never hope for the best; you can't hope that somehow showing weakness will end up currying favor with them. The best way to protect the homeland is to stay on the offense, is to find these people and bring them to justice before they hurt America again.

Second lesson—this is a different kind of war. First of all, you've got to understand, one, I never dreamt I'd be talking about war as your President when I ran for President. And, two, I wish I wasn't talking about it. I wish this hadn't happened to our country, but it did. And therefore, we must deal with it in a way that leads to a more peaceful America, in a way in which we can look back over time and say our children and grandchildren have a better chance to grow up in a peaceful world—which means we've got to be realistic.

And in a different kind of war, we've got to send signals—say things and mean them, let me put it to you that way. If you say something as the President, you better mean what you say. In order to make this world a more—[applause]. In recognizing this is a different kind of war, I said to the Taliban, “Get rid of Al Qaida in Afghanistan.” I meant what I said. And they didn't, and so the United States military did get rid of Al Qaida as well as Taliban in Afghanistan.

In other words, the Taliban was providing safe haven for these people, and we got rid of the Taliban as a government in Afghanistan and, therefore, denied Al Qaida the chance to train. Al Qaida still exists. About 75 percent of their known leaders

have been brought to justice. They're still there, but they no longer have safe haven. And we're safer for it. See, the way these people think is—they're parasitical. They want to be a parasite, and they kind of burrow into weak societies in hopes that they can have—be able to plot and plan. It's the nature of the world we live in. It's different from the past, but nevertheless, it's one that requires clear sight and strong will. And so by removing the Taliban, we're safer. By putting Al Qaida on the run out of Afghanistan, we're safer. We're also safer because Afghanistan is becoming free.

Let me remind you about what life was like there about 3½ short years ago. Young girls couldn't go to school in Afghanistan. Think about that. It's hard for anybody in this country to imagine a group of barbarians that wouldn't let young girls go to school. But that's the way it was. When I'm telling you the ideology of hate, that's what I mean. That's a hateful society, isn't it, where young girls aren't allowed to realize their dreams. Their moms would be pulled out in the public square and whipped if they didn't toe the line. That's the way the Taliban felt.

Today—today, as a result of these people being free, as a result of America acting in its self-interest and freeing the people from the Taliban, 10 million citizens, 41 percent of whom are women, have registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential elections. Powerful statistic, isn't it? It's such an uplifting statistic. The society is going from darkness to light because of freedom. And we're better off for it. We now have an ally in the war on terror. We now have a free society in a part of the world where there needs to be free societies.

These are historic times, and the world is changing. The third lesson is that when we see a threat, we must take it seriously before it fully materializes. You know, prior to September the 11th, we could see a threat overseas and say, well, we could deal

with it if we felt like it, or maybe we're not going to deal with it because it can't possibly come to hurt us. Sure enough, there was a large-scale attack on the United States of America on September the 11th, 2001, that has caused me and many in our country to change our attitude about threats overseas.

Audience member. We're praying for you, George!

The President. Thank you, sir. And it's really important—it's important we never forget the lesson. In Iraq, I saw a threat. Saddam Hussein was a threat. He was a threat because he was a sworn enemy of the United States of America. He was a threat because there was terrorist organizations in his country. Abu Nidal, Abu Abbas, Zarqawi—they were in his country. He was a threat because he had used weapons of mass destruction; is a threat because he had created instability in a volatile part of the world; is a threat because he was firing at our pilots who were enforcing sanctions. He was a threat.

And so I went to the Congress and I said, "I see a threat. My administration sees a threat." And they looked at the same intelligence I did and came to the same conclusion. I know some of them are trying to rewrite history, but they looked at the same intelligence, and they voted the authorization of force to get rid of Saddam Hussein.

The last option of the President is to use force. It's the last option. So I went to the United Nations in the hopes that diplomacy would work. I was hoping that the free world would convince Saddam Hussein to give up his weapons programs or weapons. And whatever the intelligence said, we wanted him to get rid of it. And so they passed a resolution 15 to nothing, after some deliberation, that said, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." If you're an international organization and you want to be effective, you better mean what you say. So they said "serious consequences."

Now, Saddam Hussein, as he had done for over a decade, ignored the demands of the free world. That's just the way it was. He was hoping we would look the other way again. He had no intention of disclosing or disarming because he didn't believe the free world would impose serious consequences. As a matter of fact, when they sent inspectors in, he deceived the inspectors. I have a choice to make at this point. Do I take his word as a madman, do I forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend our country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time. *[Applause]*

Thank you all. Thank you all. A couple of other things—thanks. Thank you all.

Audience member. We love you, George!

The President. Thanks. *[Laughter]* Thank you—hold on for a minute. *[Laughter]* I've got something else to tell you. A couple of other points before people start dropping out because of the heat. *[Laughter]*

The lesson is, is that when you put our troops in harm's way, you give them all the support they need. That's why I went to Congress last September, a year ago, and said, we need \$87 billion to support our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. It's important funding, really important funding. It provided for fuel and ammunition, spare parts, body armor, hazard pay, health benefits. That's important. Fortunately, most Members of the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives knew how important it was. As a matter of fact, so—the funding was so important, only 12 Senators voted against it—that's 12 out of 100—2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

When you're out rounding the vote—when you're out asking for the vote, remind people of this fact, this fact, that only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force and then didn't fund—did not vote yes to fund our troops. Four voted to authorize force and then voted no when it came to the supplemental fund-

ing. Two of those four were my opponent and his runningmate.

So they asked him. They said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." *[Laughter]* Then they went on and pressed him. He said, he's proud of his vote. And finally, he said, "It was just a complicated matter." *[Laughter]* There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

We've got hard work to do in Iraq. The enemy in Iraq cannot beat our military, cannot defeat our military. The main tool they've got is the ability to shake our conscience, to affect our will. You know, we weep when we see a person be beheaded on our TV screens, and we weep for his families. That's what we do, because we've got a conscience in America. We care deeply about every human life. We value human dignity in our society, and the enemy knows that. They know that they can shake our will and break our confidence in the mission. That's why it's very important for us to not send mixed signals to the world, not embolden these people, but remind them that when America gives its word, America will keep its word, that we will stand with the people of Iraq.

I met with the Prime Minister of Iraq yesterday. He's willing to do the hard work too. He came to our country to thank the American people. He came to our country to thank the moms and dads and husbands and wives of those who have sacrificed for his freedom and America's security. That's what he came to do. He gave a strong speech. He's a strong man. The fellow—he woke up one night in London, England—he'd been in exile. And there was two people by his bed with axes, sent by Saddam Hussein—seriously—to chop him up. And he survived. And now he's the Prime Minister of that country. He is going to lead this country—no matter how hard it gets—he will lead this country to a better day. He believes in the people of Iraq.

He spoke to the Congress. He gave a great speech to the Congress. He talked about his strategy of defeating the insurgents, of holding the elections in January. This country is going to have elections in January. Afghanistan is going to have them in October, and they'll be held in January. And my opponent chose to criticize the Prime Minister of Iraq. This great man came to our country to talk about how he's risking his life for a free Iraq, which helps America, and Senator Kerry held a press conference and questioned Prime Minister Allawi's credibility. You can't lead this country if your ally in Iraq feels like you question his credibility. The message ought to be to the Iraqi people, we support you. The message ought to be loud and clear: We'll stand with you if you do the hard work.

Earlier this week, my opponent said he would prefer the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein to the situation in Iraq today. You know, I just strongly disagree. It's tough work, no question about it. We've done tough work before. But if Saddam Hussein were in power, our security would be threatened. If Saddam Hussein—in power, there'd still would be mass graves and torture chambers in Iraq. If Saddam Hussein were in power, the world would be better off, not—the world would be worse off, not better off. And so I strongly disagree with the assessment of my opponent. I believe in liberty, and I believe in freedom, and I believe liberty can change lives.

Two other points I want to make now that you got me going. [*Laughter*] We've got great alliances. I talked to Prime Minister Tony Blair this morning, had a great talk with him. He's a good, strong leader. He sees what's happening around the world. He knows, like I know, that Iraq is a central front in the war on terror. We must whip the terrorists in Iraq so we don't have to face them here at home. That's exactly what we're seeing.

Prime Minister Allawi says that; Tony Blair says that; I say that because I under-

stand the stakes for America. And Tony understands the stakes for Great Britain and the free world. We're challenged—being challenged now, and we will rise to the challenge. I will continue to work with allies and friends. You know, I, again, disagree with my opponent who called our alliance the alliance of the coerced and the bribed. You can't build alliances if you criticize the efforts of those who are working side by side with you. So we'll build alliances. But I assure you, I will never turn over America's national security decision to leaders of other countries. [*Applause*]

Okay, one more—a couple more points. First, I want to thank all the veterans who are here. I see we've got some great vets. I want to thank the VFW. Thank you all for your service. Thanks for setting a great example.

So here's one of the things I tell the people that I firmly believe: I believe in the transformational power of liberty. See, I believe liberty can change societies. I believe everybody wants to be free too—10 million people showed up to register to vote after having been brutalized by the Taliban. It's a strong statement. This, by the way, in the face of violence. Those voters are saying, "You're not going to stop me from exercising my right as a free individual."

I visit with Prime Minister Koizumi a lot. I did recently in New York, as a matter of fact, at the U.N. General Assembly. I said, "Do you mind if I talk about you?" He said, "Fine, tell people about me." I said, "Okay." His favorite singer is Elvis. [*Laughter*] Not exactly what I want to tell you about. [*Laughter*] He was—he's the head of Japan, and we were at war with Japan 60 years ago. They were our sworn enemy. My dad fought against the Japanese. I guarantee you, your dads and granddads, husbands, fathers fought against the Japanese as well. And it was a tough war. It was a brutal war.

And after we won, a lot of people were wondering whether or not we should even

care about what Japan looked like. Harry S. Truman—the last guy to visit Janesville, Wisconsin—said yes, we should care. Let's work for a democracy in Japan. You can imagine the skepticism that abounded as a result of trying to work with an enemy. Families' lives have been turned upside down as a result of the brutal war, the tough war. And here was the President of the United States enforcing—a lot of fellow Americans saying no—we're going to help them become a democracy. And as a result of believing that liberty can transform societies, that liberty can take an enemy to a friend, I now sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi, talking about how to keep the peace that we all want. Think about that. Think about the power of liberty.

And that's what's going to happen when we get it right in Iraq. We're going to help the Iraqis have their elections. We'll help them self-govern. We'll help them as much as we can to become a stable nation by training their folks so they can do the hard work of defending themselves against the few—and I say, the few; there are 25 million people in that country, the vast majority of whom want to be free—to defend

themselves against those who would stop the march of freedom. And we'll succeed if we do not lose our will, if we do not wilt in the face of hard times. And when we succeed, a duly elected leader of Iraq will be sitting down with the American President, talking about how to keep the peace. And our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I've come to Janesville to tell you I want your vote, I want your help. I know exactly where I want to lead this country. I have the energy and drive to do so. And with your help, we'll carry this great State of Wisconsin and win a great victory in November.

Thank you for coming. May God bless. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:42 p.m. at the Janesville Conference Center. In his remarks, he referred to Janna Ryan, wife of Representative Ryan; Dave Magnum, candidate for Wisconsin's Second Congressional District; Tim Michels, senatorial candidate in Wisconsin; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Racine, Wisconsin September 24, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming out. As you can tell, I've been traveling your good State by bus. Nothing better than taking a bus trip throughout southern Wisconsin. What a fantastic, beautiful part of the world, full of great people. And a great place to end is right here in Racine. Thanks for coming out today.

Listen, the reason I'm traveling around by bus is because I'm asking for the vote. I'm here to ask for your vote, and I'm here to ask for your help. I think it's really important for you to convince your friends

and neighbors to go to the polls. We live in a free society, and we have an obligation to vote in a free society. So the first thing I'm doing—I'm going to ask you to do is to register your friends and neighbors. And make sure that as you register your friends and neighbors, to register discerning Democrats like Zell Miller. And then, after you register them to vote, head them to the polls. And when you get them to the polls, tell them, if they want a safer, stronger, and better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.